

Gov. Pritzker Announces \$327 Million in Household Assistance Available for Low-Income Families in Illinois

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PEORIA - Governor JB Pritzker today joined the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) and community partners to announce \$327 million in Help Illinois Families assistance now available through the Low-Income Household Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and the Community Services Block Grant Program (CSBG).

The program offers expanded services to support Illinois' most vulnerable residents with rent, utilities, food, and other household expenses regardless of immigration status.

With support from the American Rescue Plan Act and increased eligibility provisions by the State of Illinois, residents will have access to more utility assistance than ever before, as well as increased availability of funds per household. The State is leveraging \$209 million from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to expand relief for Illinois families struggling to pay their bills as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. LIHEAP funds are available from now through May 31, 2022. To apply, please go to DCEO's website or visit helpillinoisfamilies.com.

"This year, the State of Illinois is offering \$327 million in community assistance programs for low-income families. That includes the latest round of our Low-Income Household Energy Assistance Program and the Community Services Block Grant Program," said Governor JB Pritzker. "We are offering residents in need more access than ever before to vital safety net programs that can prevent them from falling behind on payments, falling into debt, or risking their ability to get back to work. Overall, this \$327 million investment represents a \$52 million increase over last year's programs. It's a historic investment to meet a historic moment."

To respond to the increased need that emerged during COVID-19, DCEO has implemented new permanent requirements put in place via SB0265 to increase the income threshold and to broaden eligibility for households regardless of immigration status. With more funds available, this year's LIHEAP program will increase payments per household – with an anticipated average payment of \$1,000 in the program year 2022, up from the average of \$750 last year.

"For families struggling to make ends meet, the State of Illinois is offering assistance with paying utility bills and other safety-net services to help more residents get back on their feet," said DCEO Acting Director Sylvia Garcia. "Thanks to action taken by Governor Pritzker, the Illinois General Assembly, and with the committed service of 37 statewide Community Action Agencies – we have increased access to programs that can offset the cost of monthly bills. We are encouraging residents to get in touch with DCEO and our partners today and to apply for assistance while funds remain."

SB 0265 also takes steps to codify changes made last year to ensure that, for the first time in state history, LIHEAP assistance would be made accessible for any Illinois resident with a utility bill in their name if they meet the income eligibility requirements.

Additional utility assistance/relief currently available by the State of Illinois builds on a record year in 2021, where over \$343 million in assistance was provided to over 289,000 families statewide. Last year the State leveraged additional funding from the

CARES Act, in addition to state funds, including \$112 million in Utility Disconnection Avoidance Program to supplement the urgent needs of families seen in the early months of the pandemic.

The “Help Illinois Families” program was created to expand the reach of the State’s Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) programs during the pandemic.

To encourage Illinois families to apply, the Governor joined Peoria Citizens Committee for Economic Opportunity, one of the 37 [CAA](#)’s providing services to all 102 Illinois counties to help residents receive LIHEAP and community assistance payments.

Through the Peoria Citizens Committee for Economic Opportunity, Inc., a member of the National Community Action Partnership, we are promoting transformational help to individuals, improving their quality of life by offering support services in times needed most,” said McFarland A. Bragg II, President, and CEO of PCCEO. “Programs like LIHEAP and CSBG provide residents with a rapid response and access to assistance for items like utility bills, rent, and food, especially when we move into the colder months ahead.”

"Hundreds of thousands of Illinois customers struggled to afford their monthly utility bills prior to the COVID-19 pandemic when that inability to afford life essentials was made exponentially worse,” said Karen Lusson, staff attorney at the National Consumer Law Center. "The enhanced state and federal assistance offered through LIHEAP and the recent expansions of the PIPP program are needed now more than ever.”

“Unfortunately, far too many families around the state cannot afford to adequately heat their homes when especially when temperatures start to drop,” said State Representative Jehan Gordan-Booth (D-Peoria). “Residents shouldn’t be forced to choose between heating their homes or paying for their next meal. Thank you, Governor Pritzker, for ensuring we maximize this vital lifeline so more families are able to receive additional support through LIHEAP.”

To qualify for LIHEAP, households must demonstrate if they meet the expanded income requirements of 200 percent of the poverty level, regardless of immigration status. Recommended documents for application include Social Security Number, or I-TIN, or other identification, and proof of income. Applicants need to supply their utility bills for LIHEAP and lease for rental assistance.

To help families avoid a service shutoff last year, DCEO last year took steps to expand LIHEAP eligibility, increase funding, and made the application process easier for residents. These changes were adopted as part of Governor Pritzker’s “Help Illinois

Families” initiative – designed to expand the reach of the State’s Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) programs in the wake of the pandemic. Help Illinois Families offers expanded services to support Illinois’ most vulnerable residents with rent, utilities, food, and other household expenses regardless of immigration status.

The remote application for LIHEAP and CSBG is available now on helpillinoisfamilies.com. To help eliminate any barriers to the application process, the State also provides a hotline service with multilingual assistance in over 30 languages. Residents may visit their local CAA in person or call the hotline at 1-833-711-0374.

For more information about the relief programs, visit the [DCEO website](#).